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SUBJECT: AMB RICE MEETS WITH AUSTRALIAN PERMREP QUINLAN

Classified By: Ambassador Rice for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) During a courtesy call on July 6, recently arrived Australian PR Quinlan told Ambassador Rice that Australia looked forward to continued close cooperation at the UN. He noted that Australia's priorities align closely with those of the U.S., including disarmament and nonproliferation, peacekeeping, climate change, and development. On climate change, Quinlan said he encouraged Canberra to consider hosting a follow-up conference to Copenhagen and mentioned the possibility of hosting another conference on food security, given the Rudd administration's interest in development. In the UN context, Quinlan said that Australia is a "great supporter of institutional reform," commenting that the current UN "seems unfocused and overstretched both intellectually and financially." Quinlan also said that one of "his missions" is to get Australia elected as a non-permanent member to the Security Council in 2013.

¶2. (C) Quinlan commented that he had just returned from the AU Summit in Addis Ababa where there was some grumbling among the Africans on "whither the AU." However, there was also positive motion on agriculture and food security, which are niche areas where Australia could successfully increase engagement with limited resources, he noted. He added that other areas for engagement could include energy sector development, particularly solar power and wind energy. Quinlan said that the Rudd administration hoped to broaden its engagement with Africa in general, including on development issues at the UN. Priorities for the administration include establishing a presence in Addis Ababa and Dakar, expanding contact with Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria and Zimbabwe as well as reaching out to French-speaking Africa.

¶3. (C) Ambassador Rice said U.S. and Australian priorities were virtually identical, adding that she also looked forward to continuing to work closely with Australia at the UN. In addition to providing a brief overview of U.S. priorities and key issues of the day, Ambassador Rice noted that the U.S. is working to reduce the influence of bloc politics. She underscored that some member states align themselves with their bloc even if it is not necessarily in line with their national interests. The U.S. is encouraging member states to reduce the habit of supporting bloc positions and retain the nuances their bilateral positions often contain. In an effort to change the tone and substance of U.S. engagement at the UN, we are strategically choosing our battles. She said the U.S. will continue to fight for areas that are high priority and will stand on principle on some issues -- like joining consensus on the recent GA resolution on Honduras -- but will allow other, less critical issues to pass.
RICE